

Optional Features for Outdoor Learning Areas

Birds and Bird Blinds

Description – Providing sanctuaries and feeding stations for birds on the school grounds can enhance opportunities for the community to view wildlife in a natural setting and aid in the conservation of native species. From a simple feeding station outside of school windows to bird blinds in larger settings, bird watching provides experiences where students can practice observation, inquiry-based investigations, and data collection.

Size – Bird sanctuaries can be as small as a simple feeder hanging in a tree or as large as a natural area on the school grounds.

Location – The feeding and viewing stations should be close enough to the building for easy access, yet away from the hustle and bustle of human activity.



Materials Needed – Providing the four basic needs of wildlife (food, water, shelter, and space) will help guarantee success. Attention should be given to providing shelter and protection for the birds against predators through native plantings. Select plants that bear fruit at different times of the year. Plants and shrubs that bear fruit supply sources of food throughout the year. Trees with fruit or nuts also supply seasonal foods and shelter for the birds. Contact your local nursery for plants, shrubs, and trees appropriate for your area. Provide additional food and shelter by building or purchasing feeders and houses.

Make or buy birdhouses specifically designed for the species of bird you want to attract. The size of the hole is most critical to prevent the eggs and young from being destroyed by other birds or wildlife. Add a shallow

birdbath or a shallow dish as a source of water if there is not a natural source nearby.

To facilitate observation, a bird blind can be constructed to allow small groups to watch from concealment. An approach path can be designed so that people cannot be seen when they enter the blind. This screened path can be constructed by creating a dense hedge on both sides of the approach path, by entering the blind through a ravine, or through an existing dense thicket. A basic basket weave wall with removable boards for viewing may be used to create the blind. Tree stumps of varying heights may be set vertically behind the blind for viewers to sit on while observing. Blinds can be very complex, with one-way glass, etc. However, remember, a blind is simply a place where people can watch wildlife without being seen! Use your imagination and materials at hand to build a blind.

Labor Needed – Plant flowers, shrubs, and trees. Install posts for mounting feeders and houses if there is no natural outlet for mounting them. Labor for building a bird blind may be needed.

Technical Assistance – Local Conservation Districts, Cooperative Extension Offices, the Kentucky Department for Fish and Wildlife Resources and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service can provide literature, lists of plants to attract different species, plans for houses and feeders, etc. to guide the construction process. For contact information in your county go to <http://weba.ky.gov/genericsearch/LicenseSearch.asp?AGY=17>. Also see <http://www.audubon.org/> for more information on birds and feeders

Maintenance – Filling feeders and water containers weekly and cleaning out nesting boxes yearly keep birds visiting the area.

Challenges – Use of feeders may attract species you do not want, such as squirrels, starlings, and crows. The placement, type of feeders you choose, and type of food you supply can help deter unwanted species. Seed hulls and bird droppings under the feeders can be unsightly and affect plantings below. The ongoing expense of purchasing seeds for the feeders and the ongoing process of filling feeders and watering stations can be challenging.